16p

PROVINCIAL LIBRARY
& ARCHIVES
VICTORIA B.C.
SPLENDOR SINE OCCASU.
Northwest
Collection

SPEECH

OF

JOHN M. CLAYTON, OF DELAWARE,

UPON

THE OREGON QUESTION,

DELIVERED IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

FEBRUARY 12, 1846.

WASHINGTON:
PRINTED BY GALES AND SEATON.
.....
1846.

NWP
979.51
C622

The jo
to give r
the treat
tions of
to the sa

Mr. J
but wish
amendm
by the S
It was

A joint res
eight h
tive to

Resolved
Congress a
one thousa
Britain, rel
America do
accordingly
the expirati
given to Gr
is hereby a
to issue his

Mr. C
on Forei
It was

Resolved
Congress a
forthwith,
will, in vir
teen hundr
territory, a
been receiv

Mr. C
mitted b
ment of
They

Whereas
States of A
of ten yea
the same p
be claimed
Mountains
and creeks,

SPEECH.

The joint resolution of the Committee on Foreign Relations, proposing to give notice to Great Britain of the intention of this Government to annul the treaty for the joint occupation of the Oregon territory, and the resolutions of Messrs. HANNEGAN, CALHOUN, and CRITTENDEN, having relation to the same subject, coming up as the special order—

Mr. JOHN M. CLAYTON, of Delaware, rose to address the committee, but wished, before he proceeded, that the Secretary would read first the amendment moved by the gentleman from Ohio, (Mr. ALLEN,) and referred by the Senate to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

It was read accordingly, as follows:

A joint resolution to annul and abrogate the convention of the sixth day of August, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, between the United States of America and Great Britain, relative to the country westward of the Stony or Rocky Mountains.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That, in virtue of the second article of the convention of the sixth of August, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, between the United States of America and Great Britain, relative to the country westward of the Stony or Rocky Mountains, the United States of America do now think fit to annul and abrogate that convention, and the said convention is hereby accordingly entirely annulled and abrogated: *Provided*, That this resolution shall take effect after the expiration of the term of twelve months from the day on which due notice shall have been given to Great Britain of the passage of this resolution. And the President of the United States is hereby authorized and required to give such notice, and also at the expiration of said convention to issue his proclamation setting forth that fact.

Mr. C. then requested that the amendment reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations be next read.

It was read accordingly, as follows:

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President of the United States be, and he is hereby, advised to give, forthwith, notice to the Government of Great Britain that the Government of the United States will, in virtue of the second article of the convention of the sixth of August, Anno Domini eighteen hundred and twenty-seven, between the United States and Great Britain, relative to the Oregon territory, and after the expiration of twelve months from the day on which such notice shall have been received by the Government of Great Britain, annul and abrogate that convention.

Mr. CRITTENDEN then rose and moved the resolutions heretofore submitted by him, in the form of a substitute, or amendment to the amendment of the committee, and asked that they be read.

They were read accordingly, as follows:

Whereas, by the convention concluded on the 20th day of October, 1818, between the United States of America and the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, for the period of ten years, and afterwards indefinitely extended and continued in force by another convention of the same parties, concluded the 6th day of August, 1827, it was agreed that any country that may be claimed by either party on the northwest coast of America, westward of the Stony or Rocky Mountains, now commonly called the Oregon territory, should, together with its harbors, bays, and creeks, and the navigation of all rivers within the same, be "free and open" to the vessels,

158299

citizens, and subjects, of the two Powers, but without prejudice to any claim which either of the parties might have to any part of said country; and with this further provision in the second article of the said convention of the 6th August, 1827, that either party might abrogate and annul said convention on giving due notice of twelve months to the other contracting party:

And whereas it has now become desirable that the respective claims of the United States and Great Britain should be definitely settled, and that said territory may no longer than need be remain subject to the evil consequences of the divided allegiance of its American and British population, and of the confusion and conflict of national jurisdictions, dangerous to the cherished peace and good understanding of the two countries:

With a view, therefore, that steps be taken for the abrogation of the said convention of the 6th August, 1827, in the mode prescribed in its 2d article, and that the attention of the Governments of both countries may be the more earnestly and immediately directed to renewed efforts for the settlement of all their differences and disputes in respect to said territory:

Be it resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President of the United States be, and he is hereby, authorized, at his discretion, to give to the British Government the notice required by its said 2d article for the abrogation of the said convention of the 6th of August, 1827: *Provided, however*, That in order to afford ampler time and opportunity for the amicable settlement and adjustment of all their differences and disputes in respect to said territory, said notice ought not to be given till after the close of the present session of Congress.

Mr. J. M. CLAYTON then addressed the Senate:

Two distinct propositions (said he) have been submitted to the Senate, for giving notice to the Government of Great Britain that the convention providing for the joint occupation of the territory of Oregon shall cease at the termination of twelve months from the giving of such notice. There has also been offered—though it is not now regularly before the Senate, having been referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations, who have it still before them—another proposition, which, on that account, is not now a proper subject of discussion: it is the resolution adopted on the same subject by the House of Representatives. The two resolutions now before the Senate differ from each other in these respects. That reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations proposes to give the notice in question by authority of the Congress of the United States, without conferring on the President any discretion in the matter; it takes the whole responsibility of the measure; it proceeds on the assumption that Congress has the sole authority and consequent responsibility of giving this notice recommended by the Executive. The other proposition, now moved by my honorable friend from Kentucky, in the form of an amendment to the amendment of the committee, proposes to throw the responsibility of this measure, which the President has recommended to Congress, on the President himself; it confers on him the authority to give this notice, after the present session of Congress, if he, under all the circumstances, shall then see it most expedient. It does not, at the same time, deny his right to withhold the notice, if, from what may have occurred since the communication of his recommendation to Congress, it shall appear to him most wise that such notice should not be given.

The two propositions differ also in another and a very important respect. The latter holds out, if not expressly, at least by the clearest implication, that all negotiations between the United States and Great Britain ought not now to be held as finally closed, and amounts to a recommendation that the Executive shall continue the existing negotiations with a view to the peaceable adjustment of the conflicting claims of the two Governments.

Between the two, I can have no hesitation in saying that I prefer that offered by the honorable Senator from Kentucky. The other proposes in effect that notice shall be given immediately, and leaves the President no discretion in the case. It assumes that Congress are so thoroughly

acquainted with the whole subject, and every thing that can by possibility have any bearing upon it, that, no matter what may have occurred already, or what may or shall occur hereafter, the notice must be given. To this proposition I have insuperable objections; I cannot consent to it. But it is due to myself that I should say that my opposition to it springs from no factious spirit; I know no party feeling on great questions like this, which touch the foreign relations of my country. I never have entered as a party man on the consideration of questions which vitally affect those relations, nor have those who are in the habit of acting politically with me here. Honorable Senators must well recollect the course we all took on the occasion of the settlement of our Northeastern boundary. Senators on neither side of this Chamber acted on that occasion as party men. The subject was not discussed as a party measure. On the contrary, after a prolonged discussion of its merits, we then came to a unanimous result, and presented to England an undivided front.

The same thing happened on another occasion, when I enjoyed the honor of a seat upon this floor: when we were upon the eve of a war with France, because the French Government refused to pay us the twenty-five millions agreed to by her in Mr. Rives's treaty. There was no party division on that occasion. An honorable Senator from Kentucky, now no longer a member of this body, but then chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, drew up and submitted to the Senate a report, at the close of which was a resolution which met the unanimous approbation of all the members of this body. At that time we resolved, one and all, to stand by our country, and to assert our own rights.

I say therefore, again, that there has been no occasion on which I have known this Senate sink itself so low as to divide into mere parties and factions on any great question involving the foreign relations of this country. I trust in God we shall witness no such division now. That we shall all perfectly agree respecting any proposition which may be submitted on this Oregon controversy, is not probable, perhaps scarcely possible. Each Senator, acting on his own independent personal conviction of duty, will press his own views of what ought to be the public policy. But, though we may not be able to find one common platform on which we all can stand, yet I do suppose there is not a Senator here who will cast his vote, either directly or indirectly, on a purely party ground. For my own part, I here declare, with the utmost frankness, that, whatever may be my opinion in regard to the negotiations of the Executive department on this question of Oregon, and of the manner in which those negotiations have been conducted—whatever may be my estimate of the policy of the President on this whole subject, yet, as a member of the United States Senate, and as a patriot, I mean to stand by him, so far as I can consistently with principle and honor.

He has recommended to us to give to Great Britain this notice—and he makes that recommendation on his own responsibility: yet, at the same time, he gives us not the slightest intimation that he entertains the opinion that the notice will be productive of any thing like war, or that it will be followed by any measures of a hostile character on the part of England. He has not warned us by the slightest word that war will be likely to result from this measure, or any other which he recommends to our adoption; and, if I can form any judgment from the actions of this Administration,

there can be no war; for the President, while he recommends this notice, does not recommend that the annual appropriations shall be increased by a single dollar; on the contrary, the annual estimates are to be reduced, and have been. And, further, he recommends a reduction in the tariff of duties. There is no proposal in his message for any thing like an increase of revenue by raising the duties on imports, or in any other mode.

Again: what has been the conduct of those gentlemen associated with him in his counsels, whose appropriate and official duty it would be to recommend the adoption of measures for the national defence? The Secretaries of War and of the Navy present no propositions having in view to prepare the nation for war. It is true that, after the resolution introduced by the Senator from Michigan (Mr. Cass) had been adopted by this body, the chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs did report one measure which went to increase the navy by the addition of three frigates, five sloops of war, and one or two brigs and schooners; yet, at the same time, the report was accompanied by a letter from the Secretary of the Navy, declaring that this had not been recommended as a war measure at all, but merely as providing a necessary increase in our marine force, the better to protect the commerce of the country. The idea I got from his letter was, that, in the judgment of the Secretary, the proposed increase of the navy was required, and ought to be made, supposing there would be no war. It was rendered necessary to extend an adequate protection to our increased and growing commerce.

To what other sources, then, ought we to look? Who are they who we might naturally expect ought to excite the Legislature to make preparations for war, if war were apprehended? Whose duty is it to give us the alarm? From the President, from the Heads of Department, from the chairmen of standing committees, we have received no intimation of danger, and the leading friends of the Administration on this floor give us here no more than the authorities have done.

We are in the situation so justly described by the Senator from Michigan, (Mr. Cass.) We are totally unprotected, entirely open and uncovered in case of a hostile attack from without. Our fortifications are in a state of dilapidation; or, if otherwise, we are without any in the very positions where they would be most needed should a war come upon us. The Senator from Florida (Mr. Westcott) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. Cass) have described our situation in this respect most correctly. And I here render my thanks to the Senator from Florida especially for so fully and so truly representing the undefended position of an important portion of my country. There is now no adequate protection for the city of Philadelphia, the second city, in population and wealth, in the Union. There is nothing in the shape of a fortification between Wilmington and the Capes of Delaware. There is in the Delaware bay what has been nominated a breakwater harbor, erected at vast expense by the Government, for the protection of commerce, which harbor is entirely without defence. This harbor furnishes a safe haven for vessels taking refuge in it, and would furnish such a haven for any portion of the British navy that might enter that bay in case of war. It would be to them a most valuable acquisition; for, from that point, they could strike New York, and all the most important cities on our coast, as well as utterly lay waste and demolish the towns on the banks of the Delaware

itself. Such is our present condition in reference to defence. Yet, under this state of circumstances, and with the fact before their eyes that we possess a commercial marine almost if not quite equal to the commercial marine of England herself, which is now exposed defenceless to the depredations of any enemy by sea, not one member of the Administration has apprized us that there exists the slightest danger of a war.

I look to these things as much more significant of what is to happen than any thing I find in the published correspondence between our Secretary and the British Envoy. Were I, indeed, to judge from the tenor of that correspondence, so far as it has been communicated to us by the Executive, I should say that there did exist very imminent danger of war; because I confess that I do not perceive on what ground, as there stated, the existing controversy will be peaceably settled. We have refused utterly all arbitration, either as to boundary or title. We have refused a reference of the question in dispute, not merely to crowned heads, but to a mixed commission, or a board composed of private citizens. Nearly every proposition that looks toward a peaceful settlement of the dispute has proceeded from England; and, though I have heard it asserted that the tone of the British press before the departure of the last steamer was pacific, yet it can hardly have escaped the notice of any one, that the reason given for this was the hope, and perhaps the belief in the minds of many, that this Government would be willing to sacrifice our own tariff and the protection of our own manufacturing industry, and that we should enter into a commercial treaty of some sort with England with reference to that subject. I will here take occasion to say that, if any man puts his hope of peace on such a foundation as that, he will find himself mistaken.

I say that, if I looked only at the diplomatic correspondence between the official functionaries of the two Governments, I should certainly conclude that there was imminent danger of war; but looking, as I do, at the conduct of the Administration and its friends, I am bound to say, as I do now say, here in my place, that I cannot apprehend there will be any war. Can any man suppose that the President of the United States would bring this nation to the very verge of war with one of the most powerful nations of the world, without giving to Congress the least intimation that we were in imminent danger of such an issue? To suppose such a thing is impossible. I differ on many important points from the present Administration of this Government, and I did not contribute my aid to put the existing Chief Magistrate into power; but I do not so far distrust the President's patriotism and integrity as to suppose that he would harbor the idea of putting the country into the very attitude of war, while refusing to the Legislature the slightest intimation of its approach, and while deliberately withholding from the co-ordinate branches of the Government all propositions or suggestions for the national defence.

I do not hold that the giving of the notice recommended will tend to war. The President, under all the circumstances of the case, asks from us the power to give such notice. He stands in an official position where he has the fullest opportunity to know all the benefits, as well as all the probable evils, likely to flow from such a measure. He has all the negotiation under his eye, and has a knowledge of facts which I have not. He is, or may be, in daily communication with the British Minister. I am not. The people have given these great responsibilities to him, and I am not the

man to take them from him. He asks power to give this notice, and I, for one, am willing to intrust him with that power. I would say to the President, "You have the means of knowing all the bearings and probable consequences of the measure you recommend; you have the power in your hands, and at your peril exercise that power, under the responsibilities you bear." I would say this to the President, but I would pass no resolution compelling him to give the notice. I will vote for a resolution giving him the discretion to give it, or not to give it, as he thinks best, but I will go no further.

I hold that the President of the United States has it in his power, (I do not say he has the *right*,) if to him it seems best, to bring on a war with England; for, though the Constitution has reserved to Congress alone the power officially to declare war, yet, if the President does so control our diplomatic correspondence with Great Britain as to bring on a war, it does not depend upon any action of ours to say that war shall not come. Congress, certainly, has done nothing to bring on that event; if there is any danger of it, it has not been incurred from the action of Congress. The whole action, thus far, has been confined to the Executive; but he may go still further. He may, (as others before him in like circumstances have done,) without consulting Congress, permit actual hostilities to take place. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact, that it is in the power of the President to provoke a war, if he is so disposed. If he does, I shall deeply deplore it; but the fault will not rest on my head, or on the heads of those who act politically with me. The majority of this nation have intrusted him with power, and they are responsible.

My own course on this floor, on this question, shall be to lead our councils, so far as is in my power, to whatever will contribute to an honorable peace between the two nations. I avow myself a friend to peace—to an honorable peace. I trust and hope—nay, I believe—that the President of the United States intends there shall be no war, but desires an honorable peace. I will not so far reflect upon him as to suppose he desires a war with Great Britain.

I shall not at this time go into any discussion of our title to the territory of Oregon. I shall withhold that for another place. If it shall please the Senate to go into Executive session, I shall be free to declare my sentiments there; but I hold it highly improper to carry on such a discussion here, and consider it as going to prejudge the action of the Senate, when a treaty shall come before us, provided the President shall negotiate one. I will not now say that our boundary ought to be the parallel of 49°, or the parallel of 54° 40', or any other parallel. Let him decide that point, and make his treaty in such a manner as shall best please himself and his associates in power, and then I will deliver my sentiments upon such treaty when it shall be presented. On a delicate subject of this character I do not hold it to be my duty at present to speak. I trust that whatever discussion may take place here on the general subject, Senators, knowing the possibility, and even the probability, that a treaty in some shape may come before them, will forbear to express any definite opinion as to our title to any part or the whole of Oregon.

But the honorable gentleman from Ohio over the way (Mr. ALLEN) told the Senate that he considered us as standing committed for the "whole of Oregon." How so? By a certain resolution passed at the Baltimore Con-

vention. Now, I would like to know how the Senator or any body else stands committed by a certain resolution made at the time when a Convention had been called for the purpose of nominating a candidate for the place of Chief Magistrate of the United States? The resolution referred to had for its object the enlistment of partisans in behalf of the party which offered it. There was no discussion in that body as to the ground or evidences of title. The resolution was passed in high party times, and without a moment's reflection; it committed me to nothing; and, as I think, committed nobody else. Those who choose to consider themselves as committed by such a resolution, and thereby precluded from any discussion in this Chamber of the question of title, must act on their own responsibility.

I hold that there is greater danger of involving the country in war by withholding the notice than by giving it in the form I advocate, and which has been proposed by my honorable friend from Kentucky. The measure, as it stands, in that form, is pacific; and if the notice shall be so given, it can present no just cause of offence to England. Many of the leading presses in England have so declared. A British paper I now hold in my hand, entitled the Manchester Guardian, advances the doctrine that a notice to terminate the convention of joint occupancy will be the very best means of preserving peace. I will venture to read to the Senate an extract from that paper, because it contains sentiments in which I fully concur. The editor says:

"With respect to the notice for terminating the joint occupation of Oregon, we are not sure that President Polk *may not receive it from the English Government before he can possibly be in a condition to give it himself.* But, whether given by the one side or the other, we do not conceive that it will add materially, if at all, to the chance of a hostile collision. It has been obvious enough for some time past, that, unless the question can be amicably settled in a very short period, say in twelve months at the latest, hardly any thing can prevent war; and therefore, a decisive step, like that of giving notice for putting an end to the subsisting agreement, is rather favorable than otherwise. When both Governments know that the alternative is an arrangement in a year or war, they will see that there is no time to be lost in useless discussions, and will probably hit upon some compromise to which both can accede. We are aware that this opinion is rather at variance with the views of a large portion of the press, both in England and the United States, by whom the proposal to give notice to terminate the joint occupation is regarded as decidedly unfavorable to the preservation of peace; but we see nothing in their arguments to change our own opinions on the subject."

As I observed, that is my opinion. I hold that we shall incur much greater danger of war by continuing the joint occupation of Oregon, without giving this notice, than can possibly arise from giving the notice.

I presume I may consider it as the settled determination of Congress to pass some bill for the occupation of Oregon; I do not mean its exclusive occupation, for I have no idea that Congress intends any such thing as that. Should we undertake to shut out England at once from all parts of the territory, it would be equivalent practically to a declaration of war against her, and I therefore trust and confidently hope that no such step will be taken. But I presume that some bill will be introduced, similar to the law which has been enacted by Parliament, extending the judicial jurisdiction of Iowa over our citizens in Oregon, as Great Britain has extended that of Canada over her subjects in that territory; so that our citizens shall be as fully protected by American tribunals and American officers as the subjects of Great Britain are by her officers and her courts. It seems to me that the honor of our country, as well as the safety of such of our citizens as have gone and are going to Oregon, demands thus much at our hands.

Looking at things as they will probably be at the end of the present session of Congress, I ask, which of the two courses is most likely to result in war—the giving of this notice as it has been modified by the honorable Senator from Kentucky, or the refusal of the notice in any shape? I take it for granted we are to establish our courts in Oregon as England has established hers. Her sheriffs, her marshals, her constables, enforce the justice administered by her courts. We have the same right to employ our sheriffs, our marshals, and our constables, to enforce the decisions of our own courts; and how can it escape any thinking and intelligent mind, that in such a state of things the danger of mutual collisions must increase every day? I do not, indeed, say that collision will be unavoidable; but I feel very confident, knowing as I do the character of those who will go into that territory, and have gone there, the conflicting views entertained by them and the British subjects in Oregon on almost all questions, especially those respecting civil liberty and the advantages of republican government, that the danger of collision between them will be imminent, and must be daily increasing. There will be in Oregon, as was well stated by the honorable Senator from Michigan, (Mr. Cass,) a double-headed Government; and there will be greater danger to the people of both nations there in such a state of things than if there was no Government at all, and a state of entire anarchy prevailed, Judge Lynch being the sole arbiter of all differences. We can all readily understand this. Suppose an American citizen is sued for debt, or prosecuted for assault and battery, for homicide, or any other crime; do you suppose he will submit himself to the jurisdiction and the sentence of a British judge?—that he will not appeal to his own countrymen to rescue him from the hands of an English constable? Reverse the case: Suppose the American to be the party prosecuting, and the culprit to be an Englishman—think you he will not refuse the authority of an American judge, and appeal to his fellow-subjects to deliver him from the grasp of a Yankee constable? If this joint occupation continues, there will soon happen collisions and encounters between armed posses of Englishmen and Americans; blood will be shed; and what will happen then? Our people will come to us with their story, and the English subjects will go to their Government with theirs, and neither representation will probably lose any thing by distance. We shall doubtless hear of much that the Englishman never was guilty of, and the English Government will hear as unjust charges against our people. These representations will inflame the passions of men. Certain individuals in this country, who seek to fan those passions to a blaze, will avail themselves of so favorable an opportunity. The appetite for war, always so easily excited, will increase on both sides, until at last, contrary to the wishes and efforts of the best and wisest men of both countries, we shall be precipitated into a war.

There is one great evil in this matter well worthy of the consideration of the Senate. Already the apprehension of such a struggle has paralyzed commerce, and capital is fast retreating into chests, and drawers, and old stockings. The business community are every where alarmed; and every moment of the day that alarm increases, and commerce is more and more affected. The foreign commerce of the United States at this day consists of 2,417,000 tons, while the foreign commerce of England is 2,420,759 tons; so that we are nearly equal to her; and I doubt, upon the whole, whether England has greater commercial interests to protect than ourselves. We

have seven hundred whale ships, a great India commerce, and a large and growing trade with China; but do you suppose that any merchant, in the present disturbed state of our foreign relations, with this dispute unsettled, will send out his whale ships again after they have got safely into port? Will our Indiamen be despatched again to the opposite hemisphere on voyages which must detain them for many months in distant seas? Far from it. The rate of insurance now is almost equal to a war premium; and the longer this controversy remains open, the more will our commerce be crippled. My wish therefore is, that it should be brought to a speedy and an honorable settlement. If we give the notice now proposed, we shall present the question to Great Britain in such a view as will, I believe and hope, induce her to come to a settlement, and that speedily.

But if this resolution of notice shall fail, the President, (I will not say feeling mortification, but) feeling that his proposed measures have not been accepted, and that, on the contrary, his policy has been slighted and overlooked, may perhaps resolve, for reasons best known to himself, to throw the whole responsibility on Congress, and suffer things to remain as they are until another Congress shall be elected, which will give the notice that we refuse.

I am not, as you well know, in the secrets of the President; I speak nothing *ex cathedra;* I reason only from facts before me; and I fear that the effect of our refusal may be to induce the President to stop all negotiations, and make his appeal directly to the country on this question of giving notice. That appeal will practically be directed to that most dangerous of all social elements—party feeling. Every latent prejudice against England will then be excited and roused to its utmost pitch; and while the commerce of the country is paralyzed, and men are exasperated by the destruction of their business, I fear that, in the end, representatives will be sent here who will go still further than I am disposed to go. It is due, however, to myself to say, in reply to the gentleman from Ohio, (Mr. ALLEN,) that I have not the remotest idea that, under any circumstances, men will ever be sent to this Chamber who will be ready to go beyond 54° 40′!! I earnestly hope that no men may be sent here, who will be in favor of measures that tend to a war with Great Britain, much less with Russia.

I have said thus much with a view to explain some of the reasons which will induce me to vote in favor of the amendment proposed by my friend from Kentucky, (Mr. CRITTENDEN,) and against that reported to the Senate by the Committee on Foreign Relations. I should not have troubled the Senate at this time at all, but for the extraordinary course of remark which has been indulged in by the Senator from Ohio, (Mr. ALLEN.) He is the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations in this body. He is the leading man in the first committee of the first deliberative assembly in the world. As such, whatever falls from him will go from one extremity of this land to the other, and will every where be listened to with profound interest. But it will not stop there; by the first steamer which leaves our shores for England, the remarks of the gentleman, as given through the reporters to the world, will be read with the deepest attention, and will excite general alarm. By every man it will be presumed, from the gentleman's official position, that, in the remarks they read, he speaks the sentiments of this Senate, or, at least, of a great portion of its members. He has made in this Chamber a speech, the delivery of which occupied two

days, and the great body of which consisted of the most violent denunciations of England, accompanied by a declaration that she dared not go to war; that she had become so weak and imbecile that she dare not vindicate her own rights. He has told us that the British Government will tumble to pieces if she shall dare to make war with this country. The gentleman at the same time has extolled in the highest terms the bravery of his own countrymen, and spoken proudly of their military prowess. In this sentiment I agree with him, and have nothing to object against the assertion of it. But that an honorable Senator, holding so distinguished a position, should rise before this body, and elaborately endeavor, by his utmost power, to excite the feelings of his own country against England, and, worse than that, to excite the feelings of every Englishman against this country, is, in my judgment, deeply to be regretted. It seems to have been the favorite object of that honorable Senator to seize every opportunity of discussing this subject with the avowed purpose of preparing the hearts of the people for war. He has openly acknowledged this. Now, had he confined his efforts even to preparing the hearts of his own countrymen for a war with England, it would not have been so bad by half as to prepare the hearts of the English people for a war against us. The gentleman has resorted to every consideration he could enforce, seemingly with the express design of exciting and rousing the pride of every English heart against us. There is no Englishman who shall read that speech who will not feel indignant to find that in the Chamber of the American Senate his nation has been openly denounced, and that it has been declared on this floor that she dare not go to war Sir, what would be the feeling of every American bosom on reading a speech like that reported in the British papers, as delivered by a leading member on the floor of Parliament? From his position at the head of the Committee on Foreign Relations, that gentleman may very naturally be supposed to be the connecting link between the President and the Senate, and therefore presumed to speak the sentiments and feelings of the President himself. We may judge what will be the feeling of Englishmen on reading his language from what we should experience within ourselves in the like case. Should we not rise with great indignation from reading a speech in which every topic of reproach and contempt was dwelt upon, and applied to this country and its Government, and in which it was openly asserted that we dare not go to war with England?

In reply to such language, I will say (and I hope that these poor remarks of mine may accompany his to England and elsewhere) that I do not believe that this Senate, or any considerable portion of it, approve sentiments like those he uttered in its presence. I do not believe that, if that speech was approved by any gentlemen in this Senate, they constitute, at the utmost, a third part of our number. I cannot suppose that any one who heard the gentleman approved of such an attempt to rouse the feelings of England against this country, or provoke her to a war. Nor do I believe the Senator spoke the sentiments of the President of the United States, or of either branch of Congress, or of any considerable portion of the members of either, nor those of the American people. No, sir; that is not the feeling and these are not the sentiments of the American people. They respect the English as a great and a brave nation. True, they never will submit to be trampled on, and they will fight sooner than submit to dishonor. We have told England so a thousand times. But they have

no desire, by insult and abuse, to inflame England into a war. Had they an opportunity of expressing to that gentleman their real sentiments, I am well assured that nine-tenths of their number would tell him they utterly disown and disapprove of all such attempts to excite the two nations to war. The Senator tells us, and tells England, that she dare not go to war with us. Well, sir; and the moment it shall be believed in England that that is the sentiment of the American Congress, what will be the result? Every British heart will throb with one united feeling. Every Englishman, every Irishman, every Scotchman, will rally to the assistance of his Government. Only induce them to believe that we think that of them, and war will be inevitable.

I do not belong to that class of men whom the Senator has described as seeking to depreciate their own country, and to exalt the character and strength of England, or of any other foreign Power; but I hold it to be my duty, as a sentinel placed on this post, to tell this Senate and this nation that we are not in a condition, either in a military or a naval point of view, to meet the danger of a war if it should come. If we were in danger of a war with France, I should hold it equally my duty to declare what the real posture of the country actually was. This is not depreciating the power of my country; it is but warning my country of what her duty is. Was it a very friendly part in the Senator from Ohio to condemn the whole speech of the Senator from Michigan, (Mr. Cass?) That honorable Senator thought that it belonged to him as his public duty to inform the Senate and the country, that we are in danger of war, and ought to arm the nation to meet it; that, in the present condition of our army and navy, they were an insufficient defence for the protection of our national interests; and that duty he discharged with all his energy. We unanimously voted that the appropriate committees should inquire into the facts. No wise nation will go into a contest either overrating its own strength or underrating the strength of its enemy. More battles have been lost and more wars have proved disastrous from this cause than from almost any other.

I entirely concur with the views which the Senators from Michigan and Florida have expressed on this subject. They are not to be denounced as alarmists for honestly describing our defenceless condition. From the high places they occupy, they have exposed the naked and unguarded condition of their country, and, so doing, they were strictly in the path of their duty, and are entitled to its thanks.

The honorable Senator from Ohio tells us that England dare not go to war with us, because she is exceedingly weak—so weak that she cannot defend herself; and this because her navy has lately lost that supremacy which he admits that it formerly enjoyed. He says it is not now as powerful as it was in 1802 and 1803. In this sentiment I entirely differ from the Senator, and I will make an effort to show that he is mistaken. So far from thinking that the naval power of Great Britain is less now than it was in 1802, I think, on the contrary, that at this hour it is greater than it ever was before.

[Mr. ALLEN here rose to explain. What he had said was, that the naval power of Great Britain was less, relatively to the naval power of the world, now than in 1802—that it bore then a greater proportion to the united naval power of all other nations than it did now.]

Mr. CLAYTON resumed. This position is still more objectionable than the other, as I shall endeavor to show.

I have in my hand some statistics, which have been carefully collected from the best authorities. Here Mr. C. entered into the details of the following statement:

Countries.	Commercial tonnage.	Vessels of war of all classes.	Number of guns.	Number of men.	Remarks.
England - -	2,420,759	671	16,242	40,000	98 steamers.
France - -	625,769	348	8,816	29,095	61 steamers.
United States -	2,417,002	76	2,352	8,724	5 steamers.
Russia - -	239,000	226	10,394	25,000	8 steamers, many contracted for.
Denmark -	95,375	73	754	at least.	67 gunboats.
Sweden - -	118,125	397	1,407	at least.	2 steamers and 377 gunboats.
Holland - -	214,284	132	1,544	-	132 gunboats.
Turkey - -	-	31	1,902	-	3 steamers.
Egypt - -	-	20	1,460		

England has	640	guns to each	100,000	tons of commerce.
France	1,030	do do	100,000	do.
United States	100	do do	100,000	do.
Russia	3,467	do do	100,000	do.
Denmark	877	do do	100,000	do.
Sweden	703	do do	100,000	do.
Holland	777	do do	100,000	do.

Having accompanied the items of the above table with appropriate remarks in explanation, Mr. C. proceeded to say:

And now what are the results collected from these authentic materials? I wish the Senate and the country to be well acquainted with them, in order that that country may understand the true state of things; that it may be aware of its own weakness, and thus be induced to awake to its duty of self-defence. For the protection of every hundred thousand tons of our commercial wealth we have 100 guns; but England has 640; France has 1,030; Russia has 3,467; Denmark has 877; Sweden 703, and Holland 777. In other words, England has *seven* times as many guns as we to defend the same amount of commerce; France has *ten* times as many; Russia has *thirty-five* times as many; Denmark *eight* times, Sweden *seven* times, and Holland *eight* times *as many*. England has, we thus see, mounted nearly as many guns for her defence as all the rest of the civilized world, ourselves included; and she is about seven times as well protected in this respect as we are. Indeed, it would seem that every other civilized nation yields her own great interests not less than seven times as much protection as we give to ours. France, for example, has but about one-fourth of our commerce, while we have about one-fourth of her navy. Our commercial marine, compared with that of Russia, is as ten to one, while her naval power, compared with ours, is about as five to one.

If the Senator is desirous of ascertaining the comparative strength of England, as compared with that of the rest of the world, he has here the means of doing it. He will find, on that examination, that England is guarded at every point; that her military marine is greater at this time

than it ever was before since she has been a nation. If we could choose for ourselves a period the most favorable for attacking her with a prospect of success, this would be the very worst for us we could select.

And now let it not be supposed that I seek to depreciate our own strength, or to exaggerate hers. I have not taken the largest statements I have seen of the force of Great Britain, but adopted those which were the most reliable. I hold, in the language of Hemmings, that

> "To broach a war, and not to be assur'd
> Of certain means to make a fair defence,
> Howe'er the cause be right, may justly seem
> A wilful madness."

If we have a clear and indisputable right to the whole territory of Oregon, we ought to select for its assertion and maintenance a period when we are ready to maintain it. Without further expressing any opinion on the question whether we are ready now, I leave every Senator to decide it in his own bosom, for himself.

The people of the United States have not manifested any want of confidence in the Executive; they have not formed themselves into parties on this question; the difference among them, so far as any difference exists, arises from an honest difference of opinion as to the foreign relations of the country. I believe that my countrymen are as ready to go to war for the defence of their just rights as any people on the face of the earth. All that the Senator from Ohio said, and all that he can say in regard to their bravery, or their ability to protect themselves, I heartily concur with. I do not underrate their prowess in battle—far, very far, from it. But I believe that if they could all be gathered together in one mass in front of the President's mansion, knowing that he has the power to decide the question whether we shall have war or peace, they would address him in some such language as was used by the conqueror of Agincourt, when he called his council round him, and asked them to give him their honest, sincere opinion as to his right to go to war with France. On that solemn occasion he is represented by the greatest of our dramatic poets as saying to them:

> "God forbid,
> That you should fashion, wrest, or bow your reading,
> Or nicely charge your understanding soul
> With opening titles miscreate, whose right
> Suits not in native colors with the truth;
> For God doth know how many, now in health,
> Shall drop their blood in approbation
> Of what your wisdom shall incite us to:
> Therefore take heed how you impawn our persons,
> How you awake the sleeping sword of war;
> *We charge you in the name of God, take heed!*"

Sir, while I admit, nay, insist, that my countrymen are as brave as any people on earth, and as prompt to vindicate their rights; and while I well know that, if you convince them that their title to Oregon is clear and indisputable, they will be as ready and as able to maintain it as any nation in the world can be, I would charge this Senate also, should they be called upon to decide upon the question of war or peace, in the name of God, *to take heed!*

If we are to have a war with England, an empire more powerful than ever was Rome in her palmiest days, let us have a just cause: then we shall all strike together, and I have no doubts or fears as to the issue. But

first let the people, first let us ourselves, be convinced that we are in the right. Do not let us go to battle in a bad cause; in one that is righteous I know that we can fight as well as any people that ever lived.

If this matter must come to a war, the responsibility will rest on the head of the President of the United States and his Cabinet; and it will be, as has truly been observed, such a war as the world never yet saw. It will be "the carnival of death, the vintage of the grave." It will be a war between men who profess to be Christians; with a people allied to ourselves in feeling more than all the nations of the world; a people far advanced before all mankind in intelligence and the arts and improvements of civilized life; a nation which approximates more than any other to our own principles of free government; a people who "know their rights, and, knowing, dare maintain them;" a people skilful in war, brave to a proverb, and amply supplied with all the means and sinews of war.

If we go to war with this people about our title to all Oregon, at this time, the responsibility will not rest on me. Not on me—not on me or mine, oh God! let any portion of the guilt or the sin of such a war ever be found!

are in the
righteous I

on the head
ll be, as has
It will be
a war be-
o ourselves
r advanced
nts of civil-
o our own
ights, and,
a proverb,

on, at this
on me or
a war ever